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Promotion and protection of human rights: implementation of human rights instruments

Letter dated 10 July 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you the statement made by the representative of the Russian Federation at the twenty-ninth meeting of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies (see annex).

I would be grateful if it could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 68 (a).

(*Signed*) P. **Iliichev**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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Annex to the letter dated 10 July 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Statement by the representative of the Russian Federation at the twenty-ninth meeting of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies

28 June 2017

It is encouraging that the agenda for the annual meeting of the Chairs of the treaty bodies includes an item on the follow-up to General Assembly resolution 68/268 on strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system. However, it should be noted that the entire discussion of this item is limited to a formal review of the relevant report of the Secretary-General on the status of the human rights treaty body system (A/71/118). Meanwhile, the implementation of the Addis Ababa Guidelines and the San José Guidelines is to be addressed in separate substantive discussions, although these topics are mentioned, together with other aspects of the work of the treaty bodies, in resolution 68/268. We believe that this text, like any other consensus resolution of the General Assembly, must be interpreted and applied in its entirety.

We believe that, in addition to the aforementioned guidelines, the other provisions of resolution 68/268 are also worthy of attention. In particular, there is a need for human rights treaty body experts to be more accountable for their statements and actions, to be rigorous in using only trusted and reliable sources of information, and to avoid a distorted interpretation of States' obligations and the unacceptable practice of treaty bodies exceeding their mandates.

In our view, multilingualism has recently become one of the most pressing issues. According to resolution 68/268, States parties should be able to interact with the treaty bodies, without prejudice, in any of the six official languages of the United Nations. The fact that the committees use three official working languages does not rule out the inclusion of a fourth language, at the request of the State concerned. We believe that the right of the State party to use any of the six official United Nations languages is not limited to communication with the committees during meetings, but also applies to any correspondence with them.

It is important to draw attention to the increasingly frequent use of general comments by treaty bodies in their consideration of States' periodic reports. In our view, these comments are solely the opinion of the human rights treaty body experts and may not impose on States any obligations additional to those undertaken by them when ratifying or acceding to an international treaty, unless otherwise declared by States on a voluntary basis.

Analysis of the note prepared by the United Nations Secretariat for the current meeting on the procedures of the human rights treaty bodies for following up on concluding observations, decisions and views (HRI/MC/2017/4) has only confirmed our fears that these practices are an unwarranted increase in the work of the treaty bodies and take up additional time and resources for intersessional correspondence with States regarding the implementation of concluding observations. It should be noted that this practice is not provided for by the relevant international treaties, and is an additional burden on States. We believe that the system originally established for State reporting to the treaty bodies — the regular submission of periodic reports — is the optimal tool, as each subsequent report contains information on implementation of the concluding comments received previously. Moreover, many

of the most pressing issues are also addressed in the framework of reporting under the universal periodic review mechanism.

Many of these issues have already been raised by my delegation at meetings of the States parties to the relevant international treaties held in 2016 and 2017. Responses have been received only from the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. We hope that the current meeting of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies will be a forum for an open and constructive interactive dialogue between the committee experts and States parties, as suggested in resolution 68/268, and that the full content of the discussion will be duly brought to the attention of all members of the treaty bodies.

We are convinced that such a discussion will contribute to greater trust between States parties and treaty bodies. It will also help to advance the work of these monitoring mechanisms in order to improve the fulfilment of obligations under the main international human rights treaties.

Thank you for your attention.